



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



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Hello again from Camp Taji, Iraq.

The temperatures remain high but so does the morale of our Soldiers. In this issue of the FRG Newsletter, you will hear from the new HHC Commander, learn more about the 1st JNN Platoon from Bravo Company, applaud the newly promoted Soldiers of the Renegades and say farewell to Nighthawk 6. Thank you again for your love and support; each and every one of you is ever present in our hearts and minds.

PHOENIX PROJECTS

As is often true in life, it is the little things one does that can have a large impact. This is true also for the projects wing of the Phoenix Battalion. Quite possibly one of the least expensive types of project conducted in the Raider area of operations is a MEDOP. A MEDOP is a medical operation that aims to bring much needed medical care into the communities surrounding Camp Taji. In addition to medical care, Iraqis attending the MEDOP will often also receive blankets and other needed items.



Above: CPT Keith "Doc" Powell provides care to a local Iraqi.

Participating in a MEDOP is often a humbling experience as the Soldiers watch the Iraqis express utter joy when receiving items that we as Americans often take for granted.

Projects PAO Manager – 2LT Jordan Maxcey

1ST PLATOON JOINT NETWORK NODE

As 1st Brigade continues to support the fight in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Bravo Company's 1st Platoon Joint Network Node (JNN) continues to maintain and provide adequate communication links 24 hours a day. 1st Platoon JNN, described as the backbone behind all communication links for the 1st Raider Brigade, provides enhanced command and control capability in support of the ongoing fight. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the key elements to the successful accomplishment of any mission. With the motivated and technical experts of 1st Platoon's JNN section, this task comes naturally.

Bravo Company's 1st JNN platoon is responsible for providing both secure and non-secure communications and technical support for the entire 1st Brigade, which gives Coalition Forces a dynamic advantage over the insurgents. This allows the Coalition Forces' effective execution of cooperative missions on the battlefield. It also provides morale phone lines and internet access to facilitate communication with families in a wartime environment.

1st Platoon is led by 2LT McMillen, the Platoon Leader, and SSG Brown, the Platoon Sergeant. It consists of highly

motivated and talented operators in two different sections, the Joint Network Node Shelter and KU Band Satellite operations. Both sections consist of a Network Management Technician, Telecommunications Operation Chief and many well trained Soldiers.



Above: SPC Renteria doing maintenance on the KU.

The Joint Network Node section has 4 Network Switching System Operators: SGT Mueller, SGT Edwards, SPC Curtis, and SPC Gilbert. The JNN is compiled of multiple media converters, routers, and switches. The JNN provides routing of information for its users. The JNN operators are experts on programming, troubleshooting, and configuring commercial CISCO routers and switches. These operators are responsible for managing and troubleshooting communications links between 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division Headquarters and multiple Command Post Nodes (CPN) located across the battlefield.

The KU Band Satellite Section consists of 3 Satellite Communications System Operators: SPC Renteria, SPC Carrier, and SPC Smith. The KU Band satellite provides both Frequency Division Multiple Access (FDMA) and Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) communication links. The main mission of the KU Band subsystem is to send and receive data, allowing for communications outside the local JNN. The KU Band Satellite section of the JNN platoon is responsible for the set-up, trouble shooting,

and maintenance of the KU subsystem and its components at any time.



Above: KBU Band Satellites ready for operation.

1st Platoons JNN section is very versatile and easily adapts to any circumstance. For example, if there is a mission outside the FOB that requires 1st Platoons operators and technical expertise, they are ready to accomplish that task. The JNN section is highly trained and on call to provide clear and concise communications to any element.

1st Platoons' JNN, the "AT&T service" of the combat environment, is in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is continually providing ready and reliable communications and technical support. 1st Platoon JNN is always willing to go beyond what's necessary to get the job done and will continue to impress 1st Brigade with outstanding performance and dependable communications.

JNN Platoon Leader – 2LT Chad McMillen

RAVENS

Imagine a scarlet-citrus sunset and a light breeze as a background for a ceremony in Iraq. Such was the case for the HHC Change-of-Command ceremony. The setting sun in the early evening of 9 July presented a glorious backdrop for CPT Lou Castillo to relinquish command of the company guidon to CPT Thao Reed. The guidon was passed from

the outgoing commander, CPT Castillo, to the incoming commander, CPT Reed, in a traditional ceremony.



Above: CPT Reed accepts the Company Guidon from LTC Cross.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am CPT Thao B. Reed and I am the HHC commander. I grew up in Haltom City, Texas in a large Asian-American community. I went to college on an ROTC scholarship. While at school, I met my husband Eric. I graduated from Illinois Institute of Technology with a degree in chemical engineering and was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. My first duty assignment was at Ft. Riley, Kansas after which I went to the Engineer Captain Career Course (ECCC). After graduating from the ECCC, I rejoined my husband at Ft. Hood and deployed to Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. This is my second tour in Iraq like many Soldiers in my company. I am looking forward to working with your family members.

Raven 6 – CPT Thao Reed

A WORD OF FAREWELL FROM NIGHTHAWK 6

Greetings from Taji, where today it is a comfortable 110 degrees. As I wind up my last month as the A Company Commander, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all of your love and support. I

also want to write about some of the great things your loved ones have been doing. July has been a tremendously successful month so far. We have enjoyed some great achievements and helped further secure the area for our Soldiers and the Iraqi people. Successful intelligence is a large, concerted effort, and all of the platoons have greatly contributed to our success.

The Prophet Platoon, led by recently promoted CPT Clayton Finch and his platoon sergeant, SSG Karen Youngblood, provided crucial assistance to several recent operations. This resulted in the detention of a group of insurgent leaders. SPC Patrick Knee and SPC Kareem Meleika especially deserve recognition, as they are primarily responsible for the success.



Above: SPC Herkommer and PFC Chicas of the TUAV Platoon.

CW2 Rich Filipone and SFC Joe Thompson continue to lead the TUAV Platoon to new heights (no pun intended). They have provided vital overhead coverage to the Troops on the ground in support of multiple operations and IED discoveries. Earlier this month, the TUAV Platoon broke their OIF I record for flight hours with over 3,600. This is an unheard of record and far exceeds the normal Army standard. I would also like to congratulate SPC Michael Herkommer and PFC Sergio Chicas on their recent promotions.

The HUMINT Platoon, led by WO1 Tom Hofmann, also continues to produce

great results. They are primarily responsible for gathering the intelligence leading up to our recent victories, and they continue to canvass the Brigade area of operations daily.

Congratulations are also due to this month's promotions of SGT Joshua Kenyon and SGT Richard Garza. These Soldiers are now officially NCOs, although they have more or less operated in that capacity since deploying to Iraq.

Headquarters Platoon continues to work behind the scenes to ensure daily operations run smooth. CPT DeShaunda Allen was promoted on July 1, and she and 1SG Ryan Welch help make my job much easier. Congratulations also to the promotions of SGT Kevin Cuiksa and PV2 Eric Chatterton.

Thank you again for your prayers and support. We can accomplish nothing without you by our sides.



Above: SGT Kevin Cuiksa is promoted by CPT Clayton Bell.

Nighthawk 6 – CPT Clayton Bell

A WORD FROM RENEGADE 6

Hello again members of the FRG. Once again I am proud to bring you updates from throughout the Renegade Company. July came on very fast and 1SG Apolinario

and I decided to start the month off doing one of the best things a Company Commander gets to do...promote Soldiers. A special congratulations goes out to all the Soldiers who were promoted this month, like PFC Colman, one of my orderly clerks. When asked what the difference between PV2 and a Private First Class, PFC Coleman replied, "Besides the money, you are one step closer to climbing out of the Private ranks, and getting to what all aspiring young Soldiers want to be, which is to become an NCO." PFC Colman also stated that Soldiers get just a little more respect with the PFC Rank than the mosquito wing (E2 rank).



Above: PFC Shane Coleman looks forward to more respect and more money.

Besides promotions, another great thing the Renegades have been doing this month is Training. Some might think that there is no reason to train when you are at war, but that is not the case. It is important that teams and units stay proficient in their training, and it is always better to learn from mistakes in training, rather than real life. So this month the Renegades have been going through Lane Certification Training. So I went out to see our Renegades in action. The first team I observed was Tiger Team Six. Led by SGT Martinez, Tiger Team is a communication team composed of both Bravo Company and Renegade Soldiers, whose mission is to fix any kind of communications

problems our smaller patrol bases are having. Therefore, it is important for them to stay proficient in IED training and other tactical skills. Overall, the team did an outstanding job.



Above: SGT Martinez receives his briefing from 2LT McMillen before he leads his Tiger Team down the lanes.

During the training, young Soldiers like SPC Wayne Milam and SPC Shane O'Laughlin were forced to step up and take charge of various scenarios. Some of the tasks included in the training were treating wounds, checking for secondary IEDs, clearing a landing zone for a chopper, calling for a 9 line medical evacuation, all while providing security and possibly reacting to enemy contact. Despite the hectic environment, it was a great experience for young Soldiers to step up and take charge.

The S3 Shop also conducted training for their Tactical Command Post or TACCP. Sergeant Major Andrew Holzwarth was out there training his guys and sharing his vast amount of experience and knowledge with his troops. One young Soldier, PFC Murphy Western, came upon a simulated enemy soldier who played the role of IED triggerman. PFC Western, knowing he had to follow the Rules of Engagement for Iraq, hesitated when he found the triggerman. PFC Western later said "this type of war is tough, because you don't always know what the rules are." That is why we train, to ensure that both our young Soldiers and our more seasoned

Soldiers all have a good grasp of what is right and wrong before going outside the wire. That is all I have for this time folks. Until next time, this is Renegade 6 out.

Renegade 6 - CPT Dan Walker



Above: Young Soldiers learn to lead during recent training.



To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army

John W. Cross
LTC, EN
Commanding